

Vermi-Composting

Each of us produces pound vegetable food waste every week. Why not transform that garbage into healthy food for all your plants.

Vermi-compost is a method of composting but intensified with the use of red wiggler worms. Instead of taking a few months to achieve beautiful compost, a worm composter can take as little as 6 weeks. The end result is a soil that is rich in natural nutrients, ideal for top dressing all your plants.

Worms excrete waste called castings.

Typically, these castings have a nutritional value of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Potash and calcium. The values of each vary according to their food source. The castings are coated in a hardened membrane that while breaking down slowly releases nutrients.

What more could a potted Ficus tree ask for than fertilizer delivery that mimics Mother Nature!

Composting with worms is as difficult as you want it to be. This is the great part! You can farm the worms by routinely managing the bins or you can add a handful of the red wigglers to your compost pile to give it a boost. Either way using worms to compost is a benefit.

Setting up a Worm Farm

To set up your compost bin start with a large Rubbermaid® container and drill 10, half inch holes at the bottom for drainage. Glue screen over each of the holes. The size of container you use should have



one square foot of space for every pound of material you would use in a week. Fill the container with 5 inches of peat moss that has been moistened just enough to form a ball when squeezed. Be careful not to make it too wet. On top of your peat medium add a layer of moistened shredded paper. It is now time to add the worms. You will need one pound of worms (around 1000) for every 7 pounds of organic material used in a week. The worm bin should be placed in a location out of direct sun and rain, in an area that is relatively warm and dry. If the container is to be kept inside the house or garage it would be wise to place a tray under it to catch leakage.

Adding Material



Every 2-3 days add the vegetable waste you have collected by digging a hole into the medium and dumping it in. Cover the waste with the peat and paper mixture. Each addition should be placed into a new hole. If working correctly, the compost should be complete and ready to use on your plants within 8-10 weeks and the system started all over again. You will know when the compost is ready because very little to no shredded paper will be visible and the earthy medium will appear dark with a pleasant odor.

Worm/Compost Collection

It is necessary to remove the worms from the finished compost or they will begin to die.

Refrain from feeding your worms for 7 days prior to collection. On the 8th day place a sheet of moist newspaper on the top of the bin and dump a small amount of organic material. Wait for 48 hours and the worms will have relocated on top of and under this newspaper allowing you to harvest the worm castings without the worms. Remove the finished compost and add to your favourite garden beds or tropical plants.

What's going on in The Bug Lady's Garden?

Well the frogs haven't started yet but the caddis fly is very active in the pond. Only about a ¼ of an inch, these little engineers are constantly adding sticks to their mobile home.

Every now and again I will see a dragonfly nymph but our temperatures just haven't warmed enough to bring them out into the open.

My worms on the other hand are going crazy. I have thousands of baby worms feeding on the melon I put in as a treat. Go worms go!

Upcoming Events

March 4 2006 Comox Seedy Saturday

March 10 2006 Nanaimo Flower & Garden show – Bug Workshop

March 11 2006 Cannor Parksville Bug Workshop

March 12 2006 Cannor Victoria 10:30 a.m. Applying beneficial insect demonstration

March 12 2006 Horticulture Centre of the Pacific. Beneficial insect workshop 1-4 pm

March 25 2006 Cannor Abbotsford 10:30 a.m. Applying beneficial insect demonstration

March 25 2006 Cannor Chilliwack 1:30 p.m. Applying beneficial insect demonstration

March 26 2006 Native Plant Sale by The Master Gardeners